

SENATE RESOLUTION 118

By Wilder

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Drue H. Smith, revered political correspondent and journalist on Capitol Hill in Nashville for many years.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Ms. Drue H. Smith, long-time Capitol Hill correspondent for radio and television stations and columnist for the *Green Hills*, *Belle Meade*, *West Side* and *Nashville Today* newspapers; and

WHEREAS, a true daughter of the South, Tommie Drue Henderson was born in Chattanooga to Jess and Sara Henderson; she was a graduate of the Girls' Preparatory School of Chattanooga and continued her education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, Drue began her career in journalism in Chattanooga as the Society Editor for the *Chattanooga Times* and the *Chattanooga Free Press*; she became known to many Tennesseans as an interviewer for numerous radio stations, including the Tennessee Radio Network, and for WDEF-TV Chattanooga, where she interviewed scores of famous people, including President John F. Kennedy; and

WHEREAS, when she arrived in Nashville during the 1950s, Ms. Smith became a pioneer for women in journalism and in other areas; she was the first female admitted to the Society of Professional Journalists, and the first woman to occupy the office of Chair of the Capitol Hill Press Corps; and

WHEREAS, although she had been raised in the decorous tradition of Southern Ladies, Drue did not hesitate to conduct a personal sit-in protest at a Nashville restaurant, the Gerst Haus, to allow unescorted women to eat at the counter, thereby promoting more social freedom for women in keeping with their progress in professions and the workplace; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Smith quickly earned the respect and affection of Tennessee political figures of every ideological stripe; she was named "Reporter Laureate" and made the "133rd Member of the General Assembly" by State legislators in 1992, and earlier, then Adjutant General Joe Henry, later Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, made her an Honorary member of the Tennessee National Guard; and

WHEREAS, Drue's many honors and awards include being named Broadcaster of the Year by the American Women in Radio and Television, being appointed to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service by President Kennedy, being named an Honorary Member of the Tennessee Broadcasters Association, and being the Guest of Honor at the Governor's residence in a special reception hosted by Governor Don Sundquist and former Governors Ned McWherter, Lamar Alexander, and Winfield Dunn; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Smith was famed for her portrayals of political figures (and herself) at the Middle Tennessee Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists' annual Gridiron Show and was honored by having their scholarship for young journalists named the "Drue Smith Scholarship"; and

WHEREAS, Drue was widely known for her somewhat "unconventional" and flamboyant wardrobe; some of her accessories have been dependent upon a portable power source when modeled to their best advantage; and

WHEREAS, her non-conforming dress code and unique persona notwithstanding, Drue was a tireless contributor of her time and energy to civic and altruistic causes; she was a spokeswoman and the State Chairman for the American Heart Association's Heart Sunday, was the recipient of a nationally reported \$14,000 bid at the Bachelor Bid to benefit Cystic Fibrosis and a Star Chief at the Annual March of Dimes event, and was a co-founder of the Swine Ball, among many other charitable activities; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Smith's numerous honors included being recognized as Woman of the Year by the Business and Professional Women, and as a political pioneer by the Woman's Suffrage Committee, and being accorded membership in the Tennessee Lobbyist Association on the Hill; she has been listed in the "*Who's Who in the South*" and was a member of the Belle Meade Plantation Chapter of the APTA; the Ceres Society; the Society of Professional Journalists, which she chaired for three years; and the University of Tennessee Alumni Association. Drue recently served as Honorary Chair for the Women's Political Caucus, received the Good Guy Award in 1998 and Honorary Chair for Heroes for the Heart in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Drue Smith's unequalled professional journalism and her artful use of slyly-shared – but never malicious – gossip, to obtain the release of even more and better information from her sources, was legendary; her trustworthiness in protecting a confidence, however, assured her access in her pursuit of stories; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Smith was preceded in death by her parents and her husband, the late Roy Blaney Smith; she was the proud mother of Drucilla Smith Fuller and mother-in-law to John William Fuller; and

WHEREAS, Drue's unique and colorful character and unfailing charm disguised a keen intellect and insight which was never threatening; over the years she imbedded herself in the hearts of Tennessee's politicians, her professional journalism peers, and her thousands of readers and listeners; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the eventful and bountiful life of this exceptional journalist, pioneer for gender equality, and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we honor the memory of Drue H. Smith, reflecting fondly upon her irrepressible spirit, her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to professional excellence and the welfare of her fellow human beings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Drue Smith.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.